



REPORT  
ON THE  
EDUCATION OF THE DEAF AND DUMB,  
IN THE HIGHER BRANCHES  
OF LEARNING.

BY  
**HARVEY P. PEET, LL. D.**

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NEW-YORK,

PRINTED BY JAMES EGBERT, 374 PEARL STREET,  
PRINTER TO THE INSTITUTION.

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# R E P O R T .



At the Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors of the New-York Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, held on the 11th day of May last, the following Preamble and Resolutions, submitted by Mr. WETMORE, were adopted. :—

“ WHEREAS, under a resolution of this Board, of the 12th day of November, 1850, the President, DOCTOR H. P. PEET, was requested to submit on his return from his then contemplated visit to Europe, a report upon the question, “ whether any and what Improvements in the Domestic Government of this Institution, or the System of Instruction pursued therein, his observation of the management and processes of Foreign Institutions may induce him to recommend ;”

“ AND WHEREAS, in pursuance of said resolution, at a meeting of the Board, held on the 10th day of February last, the President did submit a report in writing which was read in part, accepted, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislature as an Appendix to the Annual Report, and the same having been laid on the table of the Board in printed form at its last meeting ; Therefore,

1. "RESOLVED, That the thanks of the Board are eminently due, and hereby tendered to the President for the industry, intelligence and signal ability with which he has discharged the duty confided to him; and that the conclusions arrived at in his report as the result of his inquiries into the courses of instruction and systems of government adopted in such of the Institutions for the Deaf and Dumb as were visited by him in Great Britain and on the Continent of Europe, are entirely satisfactory to this Board and hereby receive its fullest sanction.

2. "RESOLVED, That, in the judgment of this Board, the results of the careful examination made by the President and fully detailed in his said report, furnish ample grounds of confidence in the advantages to be derived from the general plan of instruction pursued in this Institution; and that while the Board would not in any sense discourage the attempt to teach articulation in the cases of pupils not deaf from birth, who evince an aptitude to receive such instruction, yet the Board confidently believe that the best interests of the unfortunate class of persons confided to their care will be promoted by mainly relying on the use of the Manual Alphabet and the Language of Signs as the medium of conveying instruction, maintaining social communication and ultimately of attaining the true end of instruction for the Deaf and Dumb—the free use of written language.

3. "RESOLVED, That so much of the report of the President as relates to the various systems of instruction pursued in foreign institutions, be referred to the Committee of Instruction, and that the said Committee report as early as practicable on the expediency of establishing a class to be composed of pupils selected at the annual examination for their moral and intellectual qualifications, from among those graduates of the



year, who have exhibited the highest degree of attainment, for the purpose of introducing into the said class a course of instruction more elevated in regard to subjects and method, than has yet been adopted for the Deaf and Dumb.

4. "RESOLVED, If the degree of proficiency, attained by the class provided for in the preceding resolution, shall be such, after one year's experience, as to justify the measure, that application be made at the proper time to the Legislature, asking for the support of a class of pupils in the higher branches of learning, with the view of eventually establishing in this Institution a "High School for the Deaf and Dumb."

The Committee of Instruction, in the fulfillment of the duty thus assigned to them, have given to the subject embraced in the foregoing Resolutions, a careful and deliberate examination, and now submit the following

#### REPORT :

In examining the expediency of establishing, in the Institution under our care, "a class of pupils in the higher branches of learning," we are led to consider it under two points of view, as *desirable*, and as *practicable*.

The present longest term of instruction in the Institution is seven years, and from one-third to one-half of the number admitted, comprising most of the better portion of our pupils, continue to the end of this term. A consi-

derable number who might well profit by the extension of their term, are prematurely withdrawn by the interference of parents or guardians.

Measured from the very low point of departure, and estimated by the very great difficulties to be overcome, the attainments of our pupils, at the end of seven years, are usually in a high degree gratifying, and creditable to their teachers and themselves. It may, perhaps, be admitted that those, who have completed this term of instruction, are as well educated as it is *necessary* that farmers and mechanics should be. They are able to hold all necessary communications in writing, to keep short and simple accounts, to understand the details of business, to gather the news of the day with more or less ease and clearness from newspapers ; and in general information they are equal to most of those with whom they will associate in after life. When to this is added the careful mechanical, moral and religious training they have received, the results are such as we may well contemplate with thankfulness and encouragement.

But those, who know the deaf and dumb intimately, know not only that they cannot be expected, after a term of six or seven years, to compete with the better educated class of those who hear, and are thus excluded from

many enjoyments in which deafness would otherwise be no insuperable disqualification, but that with few exceptions, they cannot, in that time, acquire the ability to write our language with facility and idiomatic correctness, or to read its best authors with the ease, pleasure and improvement which well-educated persons associate with the idea of reading. All those deaf mutes, whose attainments have been cited as proofs of the ability of the deaf and dumb to acquire a thorough knowledge of language, have been under the best instruction for ten or twelve years, or have, after leaving school, enjoyed peculiar facilities for improvement in language. The late Dr. Itard, of Paris, after an intimate acquaintance for forty years with all the best pupils of the most celebrated school for deaf mutes in the world, asserts as a "demonstrated truth, that nearly all our deaf mutes, at the end of the six years allowed for their instruction, find it beyond their ability to read with a perfect understanding the greater part of the works of our language." And the experience of other schools confirms this statement. It is evident, therefore, that the present course of seven years is not sufficient to accomplish all that is desirable to accomplish for the deaf and dumb. And the remedy under consideration is the same to which Dr. Itard devoted the savings of his long and useful life, the

establishment of a class composed of the best of those who had passed through the regular term, who should pursue a course of higher studies for two or three years longer.

The advantages of a higher education for our pupils are so obvious as hardly to require enumeration. To persons cut off by their deprivation from so many social and mental enjoyments, reading is at once the cheapest, the most intellectual, and the highest moral resource, and it should ever be one of the great ends of their education to put them in the fullest possession of this resource. The addition of a year or two to their present term would be advisable for this object alone. This ability *to read*, in the full sense of the word, is peculiarly difficult of attainment for deaf mutes from birth or early infancy. The study of a language of words, through the eye alone, without the customary aid of the ear, is one of the hardest intellectual tasks ever accomplished. And estimated in the compound ratio of its importance and its difficulty, no reasonable expenditure of time should be spared to put our pupils in full possession of this master key to the great store-house of human thought, wisdom and experience.

But the full possession of our language implies also a general acquaintance with the stores of knowledge diffu-

sed among the better classes of our countrymen, and constantly drawn upon for the materials of conversation among the well-educated and intellectual. It can hardly be supposed that our pupils, coming to school wholly ignorant of words, and, to a good extent, destitute of the ideas represented by words, should acquire in six or seven years as much of this intellectual capital, as youth, blessed with all their senses, and with every advantage of education, require twelve or fifteen years to hoard up before their education is considered to be, in any sense, completed.

For the happiness and respectability of our pupils, we desire that they should be qualified to choose, to appreciate and to be acceptable to intellectual society. They are thereby further removed from the danger of evil associations. In many cases, their future prospects in life will be improved by the connections thus formed. In many others a higher mental cultivation, than the present term of instruction allows, will prevent many wounds to their feelings, and greatly promote their contentment and enjoyment.

Another strong reason for the proposed measure is found in the consideration, that many of the deaf and dumb possess talents, that, with better opportunities of cultivation, might open to more intellectual or more remunerative em-

ployments than manual labor. Some deaf mutes, in spite of every disadvantage, have become distinguished as artists, or even in departments of science and literature. Others are creditably employed as accountants, translators, conveyancers, clerks in public offices. Such instances would doubtless be more numerous, if facilities were provided for carrying the education of the more gifted portion of our pupils to a higher point.

One intellectual employment is even now open to the well-educated deaf mute, that of instructor of his companions in privation. Six of our former pupils are now employed as teachers in our own Institution, and several others in Southern and Western Institutions. The commanding position which the New York Institution has attained, attracts frequent applications for teachers who can bring a full knowledge of our methods of instruction to the younger schools of the South and West. It is manifestly in the highest degree desirable, that the graduate of our Institution, intrusted with so important a mission, should be well qualified to fulfill it creditably to his *alma mater* and himself, and usefully to the school with which he becomes connected. In our own Institution, moreover, we may need the services of additional deaf-mute teachers; and it is very important that they should themselves be thoroughly educated, before they begin to teach others.

An addition of two, three, or even four years to the present term, would not be too much for this object.

But the advantages of the proposed "High Class," would not be confined to its members. As it is remarked in the Report of the President on European Institutions, (page 114,) such a class "would improve the general standard of scholarship in the inferior classes, stimulating each pupil to strive after the honor of becoming one of its members, circulating new ideas, and encouraging a more elevated style of conversation, by the free intercourse which the members of this class have with the other pupils at times of recreation." By this reflex action, the ideas of the body of our pupils will acquire a higher tone and wider range; their colloquial dialect will improve in copiousness and precision; they will grapple with the difficulties of written language with better will and increased power, and the general estimation of the proper standard of education for a deaf mute will be so far elevated, that there will be less danger hereafter that promising pupils will be prematurely withdrawn from school.

Another advantage not to be overlooked, is, that in the case of the necessary absence of a teacher from sickness, or other causes, a member of the High Class can take his place, thus preventing much loss of time to the younger

class, acquiring for himself practice in the business of instruction, and testing his capacity for that employment.

It is not thought advisable that the members of this class should be, as at Paris, stately and constantly employed as monitors in the other classes. Our classes are of more uniform attainments, and have less need of monitors, and such an arrangement would leave the members of the High Class no time for improvement in mechanical trades, (a point in our view not to be neglected, both as a healthful exercise and a future resource,) besides necessitating an inconvenient arrangement of hours. But the occasional employment of selected members of the class as monitors, would be attended with many obvious advantages.

Has the time arrived when the establishment of a Higher Class in our Institution is *practicable*? In other words, are there among our present and recent pupils a sufficient number who would join such a class, and start it under encouraging auspices? And have we the means to try the experiment fairly? We think both questions may be answered in the affirmative.

The class, which will graduate the present summer, is one of much more than average capacity and attainments. In proof of this, we need only refer to the compositions written by them at the late exhibition at Metropolitan



Hall. Several members of this class have expressed a strong desire to join a High Class if one should be formed, and are remarkably well qualified in point of talent, zeal, and enthusiasm in the pursuit of knowledge, and previous training, to begin such a class with the best prospects of success. Some members of the class that graduated last year, have expressed a similar desire, and will doubtless avail themselves of an opportunity for higher improvement. And there are, in various parts of the country, deaf mutes belonging to wealthy families, who have not been able, during the regular course of instruction at any of our institutions, to obtain as thorough an education as their social position demands. Some of these will probably be attracted to join the proposed High Class. There are also some semi-mutes, who possessing, when they came to school, a fair knowledge of language, and a much greater facility in its acquisition than the deaf and dumb from birth, soon outstrip the progress of the ordinary classes, and for want of such a class as it is now proposed to establish, lose much of the benefit they might otherwise derive from the term allowed them.

And we are most happy to say, that the present circumstances of the Institution will permit it to continue, at its own expense, a select number of pupils for another year. A recent act of the Legislature, adding thirty-two to the

number of State pupils, has relieved us from the burden of supporting gratuitously nearly thirty pupils, waiting for vacancies in the State list. We are thus enabled to anticipate the income of the Free Education Fund, if a portion of it shall be necessary for the purpose ; and may add, that within a few months legacies of a larger amount than have ever before been left to the Institution, have been announced ; by which, when realized, the fund will be largely increased, and acquire a character of permanence. It is not improbable that the establishment of a High School for the deaf and dumb, in connection with the Institution, may enlist the sympathy and enthusiasm of the benevolent and wealthy, and in time, attract large accessions to this fund. The higher the results attained by the Institution in the education of its pupils, the greater will be the favor it will acquire with an intelligent and benevolent community.

Our means then are such, that we can try the experiment under the most encouraging auspices, for the year contemplated in the resolution of the Board ; and possibly the enlargement of the buildings effected last winter, will enable us to accommodate the additional number of pupils.

We need not say that the establishment of a High Class for the deaf and dumb, is not a new idea. The one found-

ed by Dr. Itard in the Institution of Paris, we have already referred to. The formation of such a class was proposed by Mr. Van Nostrand, one of the professors in our Institution, in a paper read before the first Convention of American Instructors; and at the second Convention a plan for a High School was introduced by Mr. Turner, of Hartford, and was favorably received by many of the members of the Convention.

If we should wait, as Mr. Turner proposed, till funds could be collected to found such a High School as a *separate* establishment, or in the hope of an endowment by Congress for that end, we fear the consummation of the plan would be very remote. But, that a High Class, and perhaps a High School for the deaf and dumb can be founded in connection with an existing Institution, we see no reason to doubt. And the high position of our own Institution, the numbers of its pupils, the zeal and talent of its instructors, and the favor we have secured with the people and the Legislature of our great and enlightened State, point to our Institution as the one to take the first move toward the addition of this crowning feature to the system of American Schools for the deaf and dumb.\*

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\* Since this paper was prepared, the Thirty-sixth Report of the American Asylum has been received, from which we learn, that a plan has been adopted for the formation of a High Class in that Institution.

If the experiment succeeds, as we doubt not it will, the last of the resolutions under which this report is presented, proposes an application to the Legislature for an appropriation for the support of a select number of State pupils as members of the High Class. Of course these should be selected, as other State pupils are, by the Superintendent of Common Schools; and the High Class in common with the other departments of the Institution be under his inspection. Such an application, urged with proper force and earnestness, and supported by favorable results already attained, will not, we trust, be refused by the Legislature of a State, that has repeatedly made liberal provision for the aid of higher seminaries of learning as well as of Common Schools. It is, we are confident, only necessary to prove that there are many of the deaf and dumb, who, by means of the proposed High Class, will attain to greater usefulness, happiness and respectability; and public sentiment will demand that the like aid shall be extended to them, that is extended by the State to the pupils of Free Academies and other higher schools, for youth blessed with all their senses. The blind are already allowed a term of seven years, at the cost of the State, though they begin with a perfect knowledge of language which it requires several years for the deaf and dumb to attain.

And we see no reason to despair that New Jersey may be led, when New York has set the example, to make similar provision for the higher education of a portion of her State pupils. Other States may, in time, do the same ; for advances made in one State in the cause of benevolence are sooner or later emulated in other States, and as there can hardly be a High School for the deaf and dumb established in each State, the pupils of some other States may possibly hereafter be sent to such a school in connection with our own Institution.

In considering the *plan* of the proposed class, we may treat of the qualifications of its members, and of its professor ; of the position in the Institution of the class, and of its teacher ; of its term of instruction, and of its course of studies. It will be readily understood, that at this time only a rough outline of the plan can be submitted. Experience will suggest changes, modifications and improvements.

The standard of admission into the High Class, should be the attainments of the better portion of the graduates of seven years. Those who have attained to this class in a shorter term, will of course be eligible to the High Class before the end of the present term. Other deaf mutes, or semi-mutes of equal attainments, whether from our own or other Institutions, may be admitted by the President on

examination. Should applicants for admission be found on such examination somewhat below the standard of admission—they may, if desired, be placed in the class of the seventh year, to pursue, or review the studies of that year as a preliminary to admission into the High Class at the next annual examination. In the selection or admission of pupils, *moral* as well as *intellectual* character should be strictly attended to.

The Committee is not prepared to recommend how many members of a graduating class should be admitted *gratuitously* into the High Class. Neither is it deemed advisable to prescribe the number rigidly in advance. It can better be adjusted each year by the number of deserving candidates, so as not to excite envy and heart-burnings by selecting one, of two or three equally deserving, as must often be done if an arbitrary rule as to number is adopted.

Taking into view the probable number of candidates, and the means of the Institution, we would recommend that at least six gratuitous places be provided for the first year—three of each sex. The number after the first year, will necessarily depend mainly on the action of the Legislature in the matter. The semi-mutes now in the Institution whose term is not expired, and who are qualified to join the proposed class, and the pupils now in the first

class, or formerly graduated, whose friends are able and willing to continue them for higher instruction, will increase the proposed class to as large a number as will be advisable for the first year. The labor of marking out a course of instruction, and the attention to each pupil necessary to the attainment of the best results, will make it inexpedient to have at the outset a very numerous class, and still more so, to have one of marked inequality in the attainments of its members.

The teacher of the High Class should be selected by the Board for superior character and eminent qualifications as an instructor of the deaf and dumb. He should possess talent, thorough education, very varied and accurate information ; ability to command the attention of his pupils, and rare facility in interpreting words and idioms, with rapidity, spirit, and fidelity in the language of gestures. His character, manners, and social position should be such, that he can in the absence of the President creditably supply his place as Vice-Principal, *ex-officio*.

The term of instruction of the proposed class, should not be less than two years ; three would be more desirable ; and there may even be pupils, for whom it may be advantageous to remain four years. The extension beyond two years is a matter to be considered hereafter, when the High School is fully established, and its course of studies

marked out. Such an extension may possibly make necessary the appointment of an additional professor.

The studies of the class should embrace the higher branches of a good English education. Special attention should be paid to the etymology, syntax, synonyms, idioms and colloquial and figurative expressions of our language. A course of reading, selected from the best authors, should be marked out, to give the class a general acquaintance with the better portions of our popular literature. The studies of the seventh year in History, Geography, Arithmetic and Astronomy, should be continued, and made thorough. Attention should be given to Drawing, and special encouragement to any decided talent for the fine arts. Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and such other useful or ornamental sciences as may be found desirable, may be taught.

If there should be pupils in the class who have already mastered the studies to which the majority of the class attend, or who, by superior talent and industry, are able to pursue additional studies at the same time, a special course may be marked out for such. Some might wish to acquire the French, or one or two other languages. Others might desire to perfect themselves in Bookkeeping, or in Trigonometry and other practical branches of the mathematics, with a view to obtain employment as accountants, survey-



ors, civil engineers, etc. There has been an instance in France, in which a deaf-mute (Paul de Vigan,) went through a course of the Physical Sciences with distinction. And there are semi-mutes both in Europe and in America, (as Dr. Kitto of London, and James Nack of New York,) who have attained to eminence as scholars, and have been successful in authorship. There may be among our pupils some, whose energies demand employment, while their circumstances do not oblige them to follow a remunerative calling. Such may become distinguished in departments of Natural History or Science.

Those members of the class who possess a fair ability to articulate and to read on the lips, should be exercised in those accomplishments, with a view to increase their facilities for social intercourse. It may even be found expedient to practice them in some generally understood system of short-hand writing, as well as in some eligible method of syllabic dactylology, if such a method be found by which those deaf persons, who are blessed with companions more than usually quick and intelligent, may be able to receive from them, on paper, or in the fingers, verbatim reports of public discourses or of social conversations.

It is evident that only a general outline of the studies of the proposed class can be sketched in advance. To fill up the details will demand very careful reflection, and a

thorough knowledge of the previous attainments of the class. When the foundation of the class is decided on, its professor appointed, and its members selected, the programme of studies can be laid down and arranged.

We may add, however, that while the members of this class should be required to use words as much as practicable in their intercourse with their teacher and with each other, we accord with the opinion expressed by the President in his Report, (p. 110,) that it is not advisable by any means to *prohibit* the use of the language of signs for the explanation of words and phrases, or even for the communication of facts. In no way can the lessons of a class of deaf mutes be made more impressive, or their progress be more easy and rapid, than by the judicious use of the language of signs, in the hands of a master of that language.

The members of this class should enjoy some privileges to mark the sense entertained of their advanced position, and be invested with a degree of monitorial authority over the other pupils. They should, however, remain subject to the general regimen of the Institution; and those whose prospects or circumstances do not make it inexpedient, should continue to improve themselves in the trade they have already learned; thus retaining and strengthening habits of industry and self-dependence, and promoting health. As they will be at the critical period of life when

the moral character is exposed to the greatest dangers, the moral and religious influences of the Institution will be to them of peculiar value.

It is hardly necessary to add, that the High Class, in common with the other classes, should be subject to the constant supervision of the President.

The advances which the cause of deaf-mute education has made, and is yet making, are among the most gratifying evidences of human progress. The possibility of instructing this class of persons at all, is a discovery that dates back less than three centuries, and it is little more than ninety years since the first school, in which more than two or three were taught at once, was founded by the benevolent De l'Épée. Now, there are nearly two hundred institutions for the deaf and dumb in Europe and America. The first introduction of the art into our own country, is so recent, that some of those who were pioneers in this work of philanthropy, are still among us in the meridian of usefulness. Thirty-four years ago, there had recently been established in America two small schools for deaf mutes, supported by paying pupils and by private benevolence—imparting instruction, in many cases, for a term of two or three years only, with imperfect apparatus and undigested methods of instruction. Now, there are in our country thirteen institutions, all firmly established, provided with

trained teachers, and with carefully prepared and improved books and apparatus; and the establishment of two others is contemplated. The Legislatures of all the States, except four or five of the most sparsely settled and remote, have made provision for the education of their deaf-mute population,—in several cases so liberal, that all of this class within their limits may share in its benefits. And there are encouraging indications that provision, equally just and liberal, will, at no very distant day, be made by every State in the Union.

Another most gratifying evidence of the progress of the cause is, that the term allowed by State beneficiaries, restricted thirty years ago to three years, has been gradually extended, in most of the States to six years, and in our own State and one or two others, in many cases, to seven years.

But while much has been accomplished, there yet remains much to be done. The cause, even in our State, high as is comparatively the ground we now occupy, is very far from having reached a point from which its future progress will demand no effort or anxiety. The favor, which the cause committed to our hands, has won from the public and the Legislature, should encourage us to greater efforts. The gratifying success which our teachers have attained, as compared with the limited time hi-

thereto allowed them, should prompt us to earnest endeavors to make their success more general—more complete. Our past advance should be regarded as opening the road to a still higher progress.

The foundation of a High Class is the next step in advance. The past progress of the Institution leads directly to it. The munificence of the benevolent, and the favor of the Legislature, have made it practicable. Public sentiment has begun to demand, and we doubt not will sustain the measure. If we defer it much longer, we shall find ourselves behind the age. And the high position, which our Institution has already won, demands of us to take the lead in all measures that will tend to the advancement of the good cause in which we are laboring, to the promotion of the happiness, and social and intellectual elevation of the deaf and dumb of our State and common country.

The Committee, in conclusion, submit the following Resolutions. and recommend their adoption by the Board.

1. RESOLVED, That it is expedient to establish in the Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, a class of pupils to pursue a course of studies embracing as far as practicable the following, viz : Instruction in the common branches continued : Drawing, Natural Philosophy, Natural History, Geometry, Algebra. Logic, Intellectual and

Moral Philosophy, and such others as the President may from time to time direct.

2. **RESOLVED;** That the said Class should consist of at least six pupils,—three of each sex, to be selected at the annual examination, in July next, by the Superintendent of Common Schools, the President, and the Committee of Examination.

3. **RESOLVED,** That it be recommended to the Board of Directors to make the necessary provision for the support and education of the said Class, until the result of the contemplated application in its behalf to the Legislature shall be known.

4. **RESOLVED,** That the President have authority to admit into the said class, after a sufficient examination under his direction as to character and qualifications, such additional number of pupils, who may desire to pursue their studies in the higher branches of learning, as in his judgment the advancement of the class may render expedient.

Respectfully submitted,

HARVEY P. PEET,

PROSPER M. WETMORE. } *Committee*

T. HEDGES, } *of*

G. THURSTON BEDELL, } *Instruction.*

B. R. WINTHROP,

Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, }  
New York, June 8, 1852. }

At a meeting of the Board of Directors, held at the Institution, on Tuesday the 8th of June, 1852, the preceding Report and Resolutions were submitted, and read by the President :

On motion, RESOLVED, unanimously, that the Report be accepted, and the Resolutions adopted.

On motion, RESOLVED, unanimously, that the necessary expences for the support and education of the class of pupils provided for in the Report of the Committee of Instruction, be audited by the Committee of Finance and paid by the Treasurer, until the pleasure of the Legislature shall be known in relation thereto.

On motion, RESOLVED, unanimously, that the Report of the Committee of Instruction be published for the use of the Board, under the direction of the Executive Committee.

*Extract from the Minutes.*

B. R. WINTHROP, *Secretary pro. tem.*

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IN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

INSTITUTION FOR THE DEAF AND DUMB, *June 8, 1852.*

ORDERED, That an edition of fifteen hundred copies of the Report of the Committee of Instruction, on the education

of the Deaf and Dumb in the higher branches of learning,  
be published in pamphlet form, for the use of the Board of  
Directors.

(Attest.)

B. R. WINTHROP, *Secretary.*









